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The Cross-border Diaries are published both in French and English
Available on
www.oecd.org/sah
www.afriquefrontieres.org

In editorial and financial partnership with the Sahel and West Africa Club-OECD

Responsible: Marie Trémoilières
SWAC-OECD
2 rue A. Pascal
75116 Paris-France
T: +33 1 45 24 89 68
F: +33 1 45 24 90 31
marie.tremolieres@oecd.org

Editor: Guy-Michel Bolouvi
Sud Communication (Sud-Com Niger)
BP 12952 Niamey-Niger
T: +227 98 20 50
F: +227 75 50 92
mboluvi@yahoo.fr

Have participated in this issue
Guy-Michel Bolouvi, Emmanuel Salliot et Marie Trémoilières

Special thanks
Olivier Narbeburu
Printing OECD

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GETTING THE CROSS-BORDER INITIATIVES PROGRAMME UNDERWAY

On 18 January 2005, the Council of Ministers and the ECOWAS Heads of State Conference officially established cross-border cooperation. The Cross-borders Initiatives Programme (CIP) is the *modus operandi* of this ECOWAS policy. Its aim is to promote the development of concrete projects lead by action and dialogue structures in all of the ECOWAS border zones.

Two pilot projects are already underway in the Sikasso-Korhogo-Bobo Dioulasso and “Sénégal méridionale” zones. Local actors met in Sikasso in September and in Ziguinchor in October 2005 to develop defined action plans for which financing is on the verge of being secured.

The Kano-Katsina-Maradi zone could rapidly follow the same route. The border areas of Nigeria and Niger are probably one of the most dense and dynamic in West Africa.

Here the trading of cereal, cattle, onions and manufactured projects is lead by a remarkable network of markets which is documented in this current issue of the Cross Border Diaries.

At the same time of launching pilot operations, in January 2006 ECOWAS presented a draft legal cross-border convention within the ECOWAS zone which has been approved by its States. The CIP is thus well on its way.

The CIP’s strength lies in the fact that it relies on local actors and capitalizes on the already numerous border experiences in the West African region. Solidifying the convergence of local actors and institutions to better promote regional integration remains a challenge, as does recognising that regional integration is built on these numerous field initiatives which are sometimes carried out only at the local level.

Cross-border cooperation is clearly underway. With the completion of this issue our thoughts go to General Cheick Oumar Diarra, Deputy Executive Secretary to ECOWAS who tragically perished in an airplane crash in October 2005.



The late General Cheick Oumar Diarra, ECOWAS Deputy Executive Secretary

On numerous occasions he expressed his faith in the concept of cross-border cooperation as a way to peace and development. He attended the meeting in Sikasso in September where he insisted on the need to take “more concrete action” because he believed that action undertaken on the ground encourages solid policies.

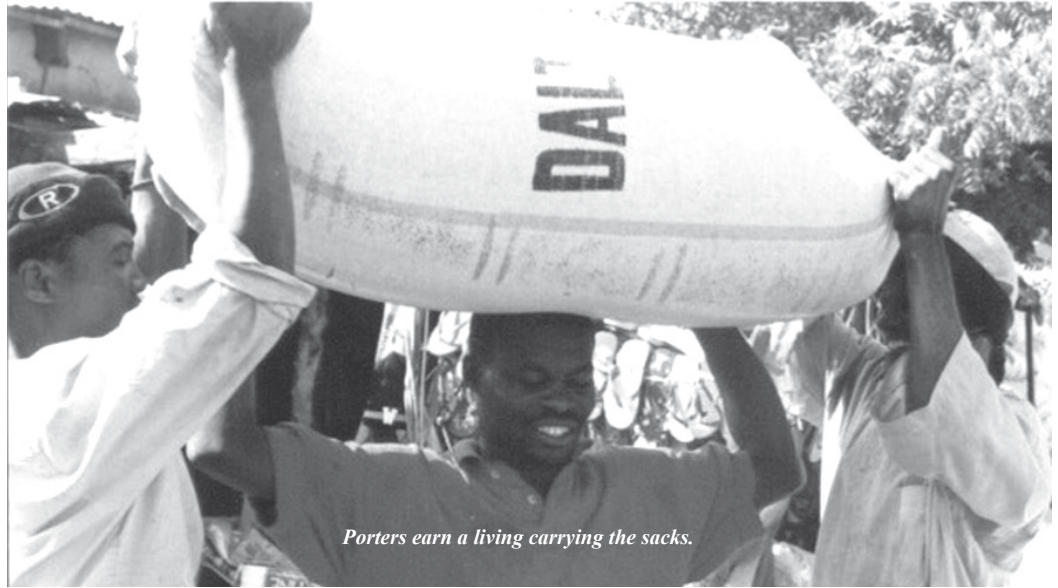
We dedicate this issue of the Cross Border Diaries to his memory. While reading this issue he would have had the feeling that he had been heard.

The Editors

CEREAL MARKETS



From 28,000 CFA francs a 100 Kg sack at the height of the food crisis the price fell sharply, reaching 13,000 CFA francs.



Porters earn a living carrying the sacks.

The arrival of plenty of cereals on the market means the food crisis is over, but prices remain very high.

The 2005-06 harvest boosted stocks, rainfall was good and pest-control was effective. But cereal prices were slightly up on the September 2004 price of 10,000 CFA francs. They had soared to 28,000 CFA francs a 100 kg sack at the height of the food crisis in June-August 2005, but then fell sharply when the new harvest reached the market in September and have continued to drift downwards, reaching 13,000 CFA francs, according to the latest monthly newsletter of the National Committee for Prevention and Management of Food Crises.

Traders are anxiously building up stocks to head off another food shortage but have the money to replenish them if necessary from northern Nigeria, while producers are selling off grain they could have held back themselves.

Maradi, Niger's breadbasket and its main Hausa city on the border with Nigeria, is very busy on its Friday and Monday market-days and becomes the country's economic capital every time the new harvest goes on sale.

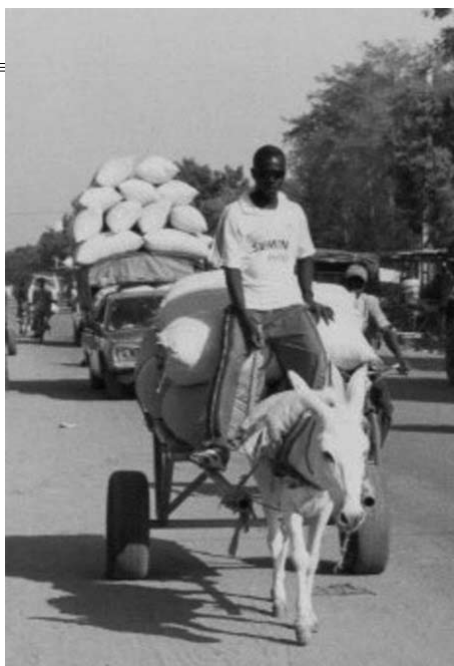
From September on, dawn breaks each market-day to the din of a city full of old jeeps, Peugeots 404 and Toyotas, the roar of heavy lorries, the putt-putting of small motorbikes, creaking carts and mostly-silent rickshaws, bicycles and donkeys, all of them focusing on the city's three grain markets – Sabon Djiémé in the heart of the big central market, Kadro further to the west and Tachar to the east.



When traders buy from farmers, the measure is about 2.8 kg, so about 40 are needed to fill a standard 100 kg sack.



Once a trader gets the millet, he reweighs it to make a profit using a new weight unit.



With the sun poking through the haze of the harmattan wind, sacks of grains are being carried back and forth by lorries and other vehicles to small shops and sheds or are leaving at night in lorries for other towns and cities, mainly Niamey, Belley Yara, Tahoua and Agadez. Porters earn a living carrying the sacks watched by supervisors.

The big deliveries come from the region's main cereal markets, especially Sabon Machi and Tessaoua (open on Tuesdays), Asin Korea (Wednesday), Dakoro (Friday), Guidan Roudji and Kornaka (both on Sunday). Grain is also collected from the



villages of Tibiri, Sarki Gnama, Sakho, Dan Kano and Gabi.

These markets are dominated by small traders who keenly buy, sell and speculate in cereals and over the years have

learned to track them down in the countryside markets, stock them in warehouses around the city and at market stalls, set up and organise teams of buyers and dictate prices.



The biggest operators no longer physically go to the markets and work in networks that monitor prices. Cereal trading is often a

family affair, with members each in charge of a link in the chain, ranging from supply to wholesale, semi-wholesale and retail (2.8 kg tins) from sales-points on the ground at the market.

These traders are a weather-vane of the country's food situation. Cereals are plentiful right now (though cost more than the previous year) but the traders warn that supply will be tight again soon. The speed at which farmers are supplying shops show the harvest has been good but also that things will be tough soon for small farmers.

The current prematurely high price of the most popular grains is because of hoarding, say El Hadj Salissou Seydou and Hamissou Djadi, who do business at Sabon Djiémé. Seydou reflects the farmers' coming anxiety. He has been trading for more than a decade, starting out as a retailer with his brother, who is also a big trader.

"We need at least three more good harvests to really get over the crisis and return to a fairly normal food situation," says the boss of the Compagnie commerciale du Niger, El Hadj Amadou Manzo, one of the most important business figures in Maradi and the country.

The tonnage of millet, sorghum, maize, niebe and turmeric in the city's markets and shops is a good sign of farm activity and yields. Millet, sorghum, maize and to a lesser extent niebe are sold in the markets at much higher prices than the farmers get, preventing the latter from buying it back for their own use.

Niebe and turmeric are exported to Nigeria but along with another cash crop, sesame, have been overshadowed by food crops because of the food crisis. However their price is holding up at Kadro market, which deals more in export products than the Sabon Djieme and Tachar Koraou markets.



From September on, dawn breaks each market-day to the din of a city full of old jeeps, Peugeots 404 and Toyotas, the roar of heavy lorries, the putt-putting of small motorbikes, creaking carts and mostly-silent rickshaws, bicycles and donkeys, all of them focusing on the city's three grain markets.

Big traders have been very busy buying since September and selling at a profit, which they are guaranteed because of their grip on prices and because of variation in the size of the unit measure between the moments of buying and selling. When traders buy from farmers, the measure is about 2.8 kg, so about 40 are needed to fill a standard 100 kg sack.

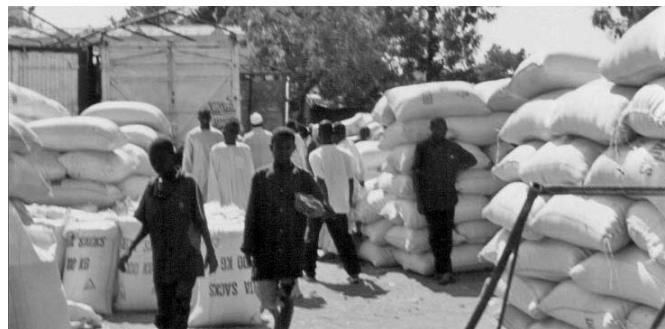
Once a trader gets the millet, he reweighs it to make a profit using a new weight unit. The traders have total control of the cereals business. Seydou says that when they buy from farmers, they agree on a price and impose their will.

When local cereal stocks (mainly millet, sorghum and maize) run out, the wholesalers, always working together, get more from Nigerian markets in Kano, Fatassouma, Maiduguri, Jibia, Gourbi (Zanfara state), Bassari (Katsina state) and others in Jigawa, Borno and Kano states, even though Niger customers prefer local millet.

Cross-border cereals trade is daily, says El Hadj Issaka Bawa, who has been involved in it since he began working with his father when he was eight. "The trade with Nigeria has always been there because of ancient family ties," he adds.

Seydou and Djadi say that before they cross the border, they agree not to pay more than 12,000 CFA francs for a 100 kg sack. Taking it back to Niger in 20-35 tonne lorries costs between 160 and 250 naira, which works out at between 700 and 1,000 CFA francs per sack, depending on the distance.

"We go through Niger customs at Dan Issa and pay duty of 4,600 CFA francs per lorry. There's no official charge on the Nigerian side but in practice, drivers have to pay something at each checkpoint." Bawa says that "even at Dan Issa, there's no official tax but drivers have to pay."



The current prematurely high price of the most popular grains is because of hoarding.

The only official tax, he says, is at Dan Issa on exports, mostly to Kano and Jibia, of between 40,000 and 60,000 CFA francs per lorry. Apart from this variable duty and traditional annoyances, the main problem is very poor security involving transactions in Nigeria. "We have to carry large amounts of cash because of the different currency," says Seydou. "Robbery is common and I lost 170 million CFA francs that way in 2005." ●



The arrival of plenty of cereals on the market means the food crisis is over, but prices remain very high.



FARMERS' PROBLEMS

The drought has ended and good weather is back. The income of farmers has been rather good but is still burdened by recent debts.

Niger has unpredictable weather and is one of the Sahel's poorest countries, with a rapidly growing population and food shortages one year in every three. It has structural problems with production, market access and commercialisation. Agricultural output was good in 2005 but not enough to right the imbalance.

El Hadj Amadou Yacouba, farmer and town councillor in Tibiri (Maradi province), is an educated and modern-minded farmer with several pieces of land totalling 45 hectares. He's sometimes happy, sometimes gloomy about the situation: "It's been a good harvest," he says, "but can it meet the needs of farmers until the next one comes round?" he wonders.

El Hadj Amadou Manzo, head of the Compagnie commerciale du Niger, is glad the harvest is replenishing his shops, but is concerned about how farming is organised:



El Hadj Amadou Yacouba

"How can a farmer live a whole year on the proceeds of just four months work?"

Yacouba points out that the harvest has been "much better than the previous year, but the crisis continues, as well as the need to repay debts in cash and kind that were incurred at difficult times in the past year." Apart from cowpeas, cash crops yields were down "because the priority was output of major consumer items such as millet and sorghum."

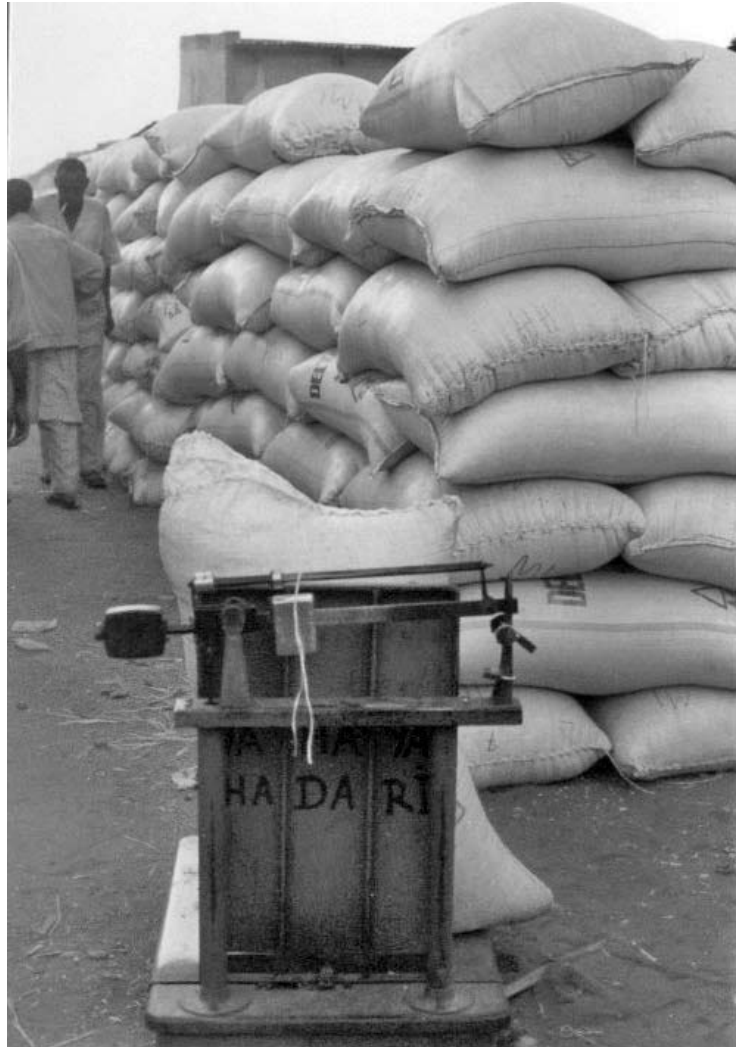
As well as the steady natural deterioration of the soil, farmers have to cope with increasing population density, which reduces the size of family plots. The last census estimate, in 2001, showed that the country's breadbasket, Maradi province, had the highest density except for the capital, Niamey (707,951 inhabitants – 2,776.3/ km²).



Maradi had 2,235,748 people (53.5/km²), followed by Zinder province (2,080,250 – 13.5/km²), Tahoua (1,972,729 – 17.4/km²), Tillaberi (1,889,515 – 19.4/km²), Dosso (1,505,864 – 44.5/km²), Diffa 346,595 – 2.2/km² and Agadez (321,639 – 0.5/km²).

Moneylenders buy the crops cheaply from farmers when they can make a profit. Yacouba notes that “some people sell their houses and stock up on cereals that they re-sell in the dry season for twice the price.” Profit is guaranteed “because the price the farmer gets has nothing to do with the price in the shops. Once the shopkeeper gets hold of the millet crop, it becomes too expensive for the farmer to buy to feed his family.” This is partly why the country’s breadbasket is also a place where famine occurs.

Much of the cereals go to neighbouring Nigeria and is sold at prices people in Niger can’t afford. El Hadj Amadou Yacouba only sees a structural solution “production methods have to be improved and earlier and more pest-resistant varieties introduced, as well as better ploughing techniques for faster work on bigger farms.”



“It’s been a good harvest, but can it meet the needs of farmers until the next one comes round?”



THE CIP COMES OF AGE

The first pilot projects in the ECOWAS Cross-Border Initiatives Programme (CIP) have been launched at two meetings in the border towns of Sikasso and Ziguinchor.

The workshop in Sikasso dealt with the Burkina-Côte d'Ivoire-Mali border area known as SKBo (Sikasso-Korhogo-Bobo Dioulasso) from 27 to 29 September 2005 and the one in Ziguinchor with the Senegal, The Gambia and Guinea-Bissau area (Sénégalie méridionale) from 24 to 26 October.

The workshops each produced an action and follow-up programme with realistic and feasible projects based on the “cross-border area” concept – 19 were proposed in Sikasso and 21 in Ziguinchor.

The participants clearly demonstrated their desire for integration and their community consciousness.

The workshops gave a backbone to the CIP with projects in health, communications, agriculture and stock-raising, environmental management, economic development, free movement of goods and people and promotion of peace through social and cultural development. The meetings were not just talking-shops and focus is now on implementation of the projects agreed on by all.



**CROSS BORDER
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With the adoption of the Memorandum "Cross-border Concept or Local Integration" on 18 January 2005 by ECOWAS' Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, cross-border cooperation officially integrated onto ECOWAS' agenda. The Cross-border Initiatives Programme (CIP) is the modus operandi of ECOWAS' cross-border cooperation policy. It aims to compile, coordinate and formalise initiatives to increase cooperation frameworks on intra-community borders.

To instigate the CIP process, two pilot operations have been launched during the seminars of Sikasso (Mali) and Ziguinchor-Senegal in September and October 2005, respectively. Other zones, such as the Maradi-Katsina-Kano route or the Senegal River Valley¹ could rapidly follow suit. The essential point being, that some areas show the effectiveness of the cross-border cooperation approach.

At the Malian Government's invitation, the Sikasso workshop was co-organised by the Sahel and West Africa Club/OECD, UNOWA and the MDP. The Minister of the Interior and Local Communities of Mali, General Koné, and the Minister of Local Administration and Decentralisation of Burkina Faso, Moumeni Fabre, participated. The CILSS, represented by Musa Mbenga and the WAEMU were involved with the workshop.

At the end of the workshop, the local public and private actors developed a cross-border action plan. Development partners are supporting this action plan which is comprised of short-term concrete actions and a dialogue and consultation process. It will be implemented at the beginning of 2006 and will be the focus of an evaluation workshop six months after its implementation. UNDP has accepted to finance local technical assistance for this process.

The action plan involves the following sectors:

- security and the free circulation of people and goods
- economic integration and territorial development
- social and cultural cooperation.

Participants at the workshop expressed the desire for Côte d'Ivoire to return to peace and for there to be more Korhogo representatives implicated in the work at the next session.

The Ziguinchor workshop was dedicated to the ECOWAS deputy executive secretary, General Cheick Oumar Diarra, who died accidentally on 22nd October 2005. It was co-organised by Enda Diapol and the Sahel and West Africa Club and financed by the Canadian International Development Agency, the Austrian Development Agency and the SWAC.

It brought together one hundred participants from civil society, the private sector, government as well as development partners. The three governments were represented by:

- Abdoulie Manneh, Permanent Secretary of The Ministry of Local Authorities and Land Planning, for The Gambia
- Ibrahima Daniel SALLA, Director of the Private Office and Principal Counsellor for the Minister of Internal Administration of Guinea-Bissau
- and finally Baba Ndiaye, Director of the Private Office of the Ministry of Town Planning and the Interior for Senegal.

The complex political context of the region has not hindered local populations from demonstrating their desire to develop cross-border cooperation and develop proposals on the basis of existing initiatives which already are very dynamic. A progress review meeting is envisaged in The Gambia

in 2006. Several development partners are supporting this process.

The participants discussed cross-border issues such as:

- Sustainable and concerted natural resource management;
- Economic development and the free movement of persons and goods
- Cross border social and cultural development based on peace and security

The following should be retained from the first pilot operations:

It seems that the increase of coordinated actions and joint cross-border projects in the areas of health, education, culture, agriculture, livestock breeding, the fight against insecurity, is evermore one of the surest means to solidifying West African regional construction. By demonstrating the reality of cross-border cooperation potential in West Africa, these workshops supported by the local populations inspire ECOWAS and the States to develop this approach much more systematically which would be one of the tools to build a single West African market and implement the Economic Partnership Agreements with the European Union.

Simultaneously to the pilot operations, ECOWAS and the SWAC have been drafting a legal cross-border convention for the ECOWAS zone, submitted to the concerned ECOWAS authorities in January 2006. This project is partially inspired by the Madrid Convention, the founding legal act of cross-border cooperation in Europe. ●



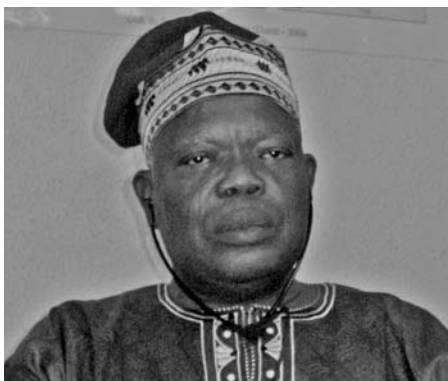
FULL SPEED AHEAD

The Cross-Border Initiatives Programme (CIP) has confirmed its grassroots approach to solving people's problems by launching two packages of pilot projects at workshops in Sikasso (Mali) and Ziguinchor (Senegal). Instead of "ready-made" projects served up by institutions, the CIP is backing locally-initiated ones, that sometimes also cost less. This overturns the basic tenets of development prophets.

The ECOWAS representative to the meetings, N'Faly Sanoh, said the CIP emphasis on local initiatives, which the workshops confirmed, was "because the new drive for decentralisation requires local people to take control of their own development and help draft their own programme and projects to seriously advance the idea of a "cross-border area."

Talking about local people, Professor Anthony Asiwaju of the African University Institute, in Imeko (Ogun state, Nigeria), invited to the Sikasso workshop said "Many participants here say they're concerned, but at what level are they? They don't go the market, don't use public transport nor have fields that straddle the border."

Sanoh disagreed: "I think the real actors are right here, because they're involved through the structures in place. Livestock raisers, traders and haulage operators can't work alone and are grouped into unions that defend their interests. What we're seeing here really show the need for local actors to speak through structures and organisations."



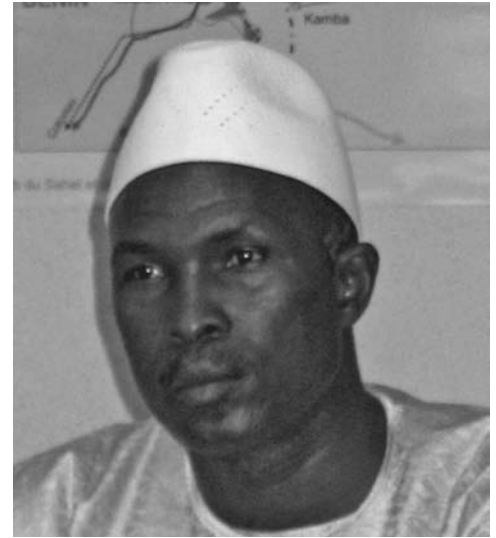
Professor Anthony Asiwaju

Haulage people, livestock raisers, farmers and others are represented by bodies that fight for their interests."

Sanoh welcomed the vigorous regional integration process, in his opinion launched more than 30 years ago. "There's been progress but also delays and ECOWAS realised it had its limitations," he said. "One was not involving local actors enough in carrying out integration projects. So ECOWAS decision-makers adopted the 'cross-border area' concept in January 2005, confirming it will pay more attention to local proposals in its integration policy."

ECOWAS was also aware, he said, of the problems of implementing its decisions – "the hassles along its road network and the urgent need to do something about this." ECOWAS had adopted a three-year action plan to cut the road delays and was glad to see that the extensive workshop discussions agreed about this since, he said, "without free movement of goods and people, regional integration will not happen."

Traore Drissa, customs chief at Koloko, on western Burkina's border with Mali, did not deny there were difficulties along main roads, but said "calling them hassles is rather excessive since customs procedures are complex. Just saying you're exempt from custom duty isn't enough. You have to fill out a form declaring this with the assistance of a customs officer."



N'Faly Sanoh

Drissa said the misunderstanding arose here. "To go through this process implies buying forms from the local chamber of commerce. So just making a declaration costs money and also time to fill in the forms, some of which are pretty long. Is this the hassle we are talking about?" He admitted however that "some customs officers don't do their job properly." Officials elsewhere are the same, he said, but "not everyone's cleaner than clean. Some customs officers can also be criticised for how they explain things and this too increases ignorance and suspicion of customs regulations."

His Malian colleague Mamadou Toure, deputy customs chief at Sikasso, stressed the importance of the rules. "People must have the right papers to cross the border. If they're businesspeople exporting goods, they need a free temporary export licence for cattle and for cereals, fruit and vegetables an export declaration from a custom office. Then they should have no problems."

So where does the trouble lie? Toure says it comes with "the extra work customs have to do. When people get to the border outside normal hours, they have to pay extra by law."

This leads to confusion. Toure said that "Each crossing of the border is subject to its own rules. There's no problem with food belonging to a person for their own consumption. But we've noticed that such food is often enough to feed a dozen, 20 or even 100 people. That isn't 'own consumption,' so customs forms must be filled in. Also, food entering or leaving Mali is duty-free, but when you import, even if you have a certificate of origin, you have to pay domestic taxes such as VAT."

Traore Drissa, customs chief at Koloko, said information drives were needed. *“Even within the standardised WAEMU area, duty-free goods are still subject to other internal taxes that WAEMU has allowed member-states to charge, especially for cola nuts, tobacco and alcoholic beverages. The customs officer has to explain that and make people understand. That isn’t being done and it’s why people complain about how they’re treated.”*

Mamadou Toure would like *“more consultation between officials on each side of a border, meetings between regional offices and awareness drives targeting customs officers. ‘Open days’ are held so people can learn about what we do. The Malian customs head office has set up a framework to consult with people. But we still have to produce results. In September, for example, we were supposed to collect nearly three billion CFA francs. You think we weren’t concerned about applying the rules when we had that target to meet?”*



Traoré Drissa, customs chief at Koloko

Drissa, his colleague from Burkina called for *“greater efforts to clear up these misunderstandings, through more publicity drives among both the population and customs officers themselves.”*

Toure said that *“when businesspeople think they’ve nothing to pay and then get to the border and have to see a clearance officer and fill in a form to see how much they should pay, means delays. Don’t forget that for statistical reasons, Mali needs to know how much livestock is exported each year to Burkina Faso and Côte d’Ivoire. This data can’t be collected unless forms are filled in. This is a complicated process and requires explanations and information.”*

So regional bodies such as ECOWAS have an important part to play in making border inhabitants and officials aware of regional measures approved by member-states. N’Faly Sanoh said that for ECOWAS to achieve its goal of integration, it had to take account of local inhabitants and use the CIP to help implement cross-border projects discussed during the three-day workshop. *“Long live cross-border areas!”* he said. ●



Mamadou Touré, deputy customs chief at Sikasso



WHAT ABOUT LOCAL POLITICIANS ?

«We want to conduct our business without restraints and barriers»



*Mama Sylla,
Mayor of Sikasso (Mali)*

Why was Sikasso chosen to host this workshop?

Because it's a sub-regional crossroads, where you find people from all ethnic groups of the region's countries.

What early projects would you like to see the Cross-Border Initiatives Programme (CIP) come up with?

First we want true integration, so Malians, Burkinabe and Ivoirians can communicate freely, marry each other, share daily activity and move around freely.

What about police and custom posts?

The agreements are there and must be implemented. After this workshop ends, we need action. Borders prevent communication and Malians, Burkinabe, Ivoirians and others must speak to each other so they can boost development. We're all brothers and sisters and we've been separated by the arbitrary lines drawn by colonialism. We have to get beyond that.

Apart from freedom of movement, we need joint development programmes, especially in agriculture, livestock raising, fishing and transport. The Ivorian conflict has highlighted the issue of sea access for Mali and Burkina Faso and the need for joint projects to solve the problems of being landlocked. Mali is also indebted to Burkina, through which all

its imports via Ghanaian and Togolese ports have to come.

What about ethnic relations with your two neighbours, Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire?

You can't really talk about ethnic relations. Malians, Burkinabe and Ivoirians have always had land, similar socio-cultural relations and daily needs in common. Colonial rule divided families and people in Mali still have relatives living in Burkina and Côte d'Ivoire. But we're all the same family. You have Bambara in Sikasso and Bobo and in Côte d'Ivoire. That goes for the Senufo and other ethnic groups too.

Our fight today isn't to redraw the map but to get rid of the idea of barriers so we can all live better together. The authorities are often hampered by this and it's up to people and politicians living in border areas to make the population aware of the issue.

Do you blame the administrative legacy?

We want an African life, as it's the sub-region, and restoration of the things that bring us together and unite us. I'm not saying "Down with all documents!" but I'm saying we were there before all the paper IDs came along and we have sufficient identity through our common way of life.

Think of an old lady who's never left the village where she was born who decides to go and visit one of her grandsons and is asked at the border for an ID. Poor villagers don't have the money to get themselves such documents. It's also a puzzling notion for them because they don't understand how a piece of paper can prove their identity. We want Malians, Burkinabe and Ivoirians to be able to communicate and move about freely. This will bring development.

Won't freedom of movement and the loss of revenue from customs duties and document fees cause you concern as mayor?

Each country has its own customs rules and regulations but we have to insist that customs officials and police don't get mixed up in fraud and corruption. Getting something through customs must be a normal procedure. Free circulation of people and goods means that once through customs, you shouldn't run into another customs officer 100 metres further on who tries to extort money by claiming the first clearance was done wrongly.

Our farmers, stockraisers, fishermen and craftspeople – Malian, Burkinabe or Ivoirian alike – must be allowed to sell their products where they want. This can be done by consultation and cooperation. ECOWAS and WAEMU have experts who can reduce and standardise the duties and abolish undesirable barriers.

Isn't it also your job to implement the agreements?

Local politicians are supposed to take action, communicate with the inhabitants, explain their rights and duties and warn them about greedy officials. ●

“No solid and sustainable development is possible without involvement of local people and politicians, civil society, youth organisations, women, tribal chiefs, religious leaders and the businesspeople.”

Do you agree with the official purpose of the workshop, to discuss “security, development and cross-border activities in areas of Mali and Burkina Faso bordering Côte d’Ivoire”?

Yes, and the main reason I’m here is because it’s important for Côte d’Ivoire to be represented. I and other local politicians are very disappointed about the crisis in our country. The name of the meeting talks about two neighbours of Côte d’Ivoire.

I think all three countries should get together and move forward because history obliges them to work together. The Ivorian crisis will eventually pass, so we have to look to the future, which is why Côte d’Ivoire has to be at this meeting.

Côte d’Ivoire is very poorly represented at the workshop...

This is due to the crisis we’re having. But local officials, especially mayors, haven’t been forgotten. That’s why I was invited as president of the Ivorian Union of Cities and Towns. I accepted to show that whatever problems we have, we mustn’t forget the traditions, language, cooperation and battles against colonialism that unite our three countries.

The workshop has had to talk about Côte d’Ivoire because Mali and Burkina can’t do anything without it being involved and vice-versa. We’re obliged to live, think and act together. None of the resolutions passed here will mean anything unless they’re implemented by all three countries.

I truly feel I’m in a friendly and fraternal country, with everyone concerned to know when the Ivorian crisis will end. We have to think of the people who want peace there and we have to restore it because it’ll benefit the whole region.

What’s the MDP’s status at this workshop?

The MDP isn’t a funding source but a regional organisation for mayors to push for decentralisation in West and Central Africa and persuade development partners to fund such projects, with the MDP giving help and advice. Anything that enables the mayors to do their job better concerns the MDP.

The MDP is at the workshop because it’s already done an extensive survey of economic and social cross-border issues, especially in the SKBo area. We’re linked with the Sahel and West Africa Club (SWAC), which also looks for funding from governments or groups of governments.

Are you satisfied with the projects suggested by the grassroots people?

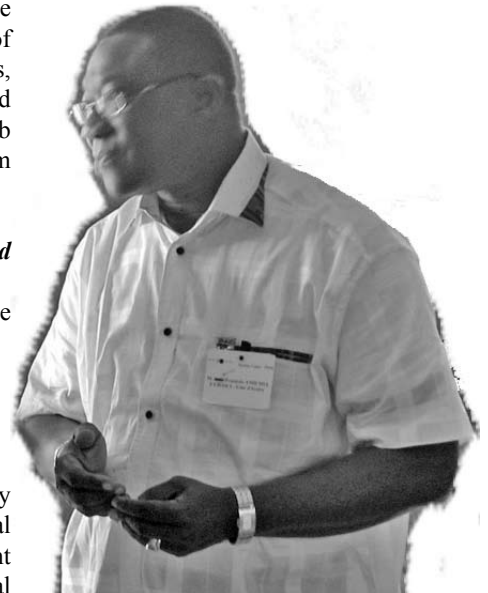
Yes, it meets our main concern to stay close to local people and their aspirations.

Not all projects are run by local politicians.

What leeway do you have to satisfy the people who vote for you?

Some central governments have already transferred certain powers to local or regional authorities. Whenever a government devolves such functions, chosen by local people or town councils, the transfer comes into effect. Some projects, such as those concerning free movement of goods and people across borders, are run by the government. We sincerely hope countries that have signed draft agreements with ECOWAS will apply them for the benefit of their people.

Some agreements, such as partnerships and twinning arrangements, are between towns or groups of towns. Town councils then make the decisions. The mayor of Korhogo and his council, for example, can decide to send 150 schoolchildren from the region each year to schools in Banfora or Bobo without reference to the Ivorian or Burkina governments.



***François Albert Amichia,
Mayor of Treichville (Côte d’Ivoire)
President of the Côte d’Ivoire Union of Cities and Towns
Vice-president of the Partnership for Municipal Development***

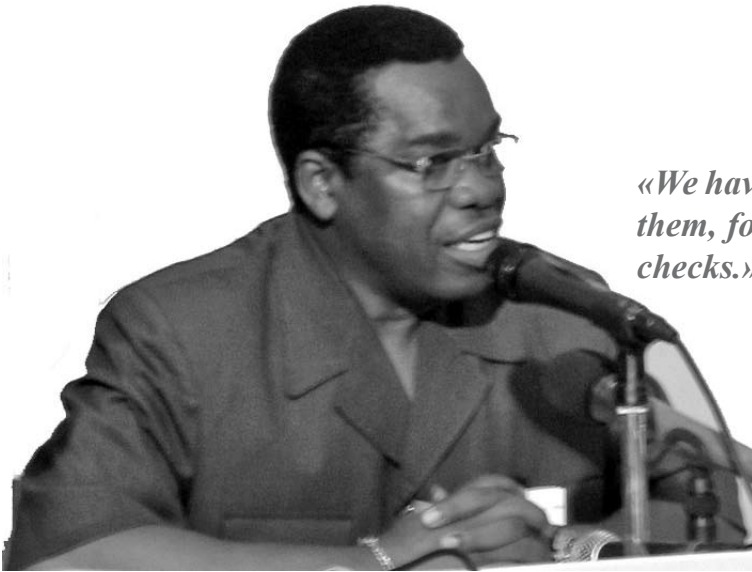
The Ivorian town of Ferkessedougou can also decide to buy an ambulance jointly with the Burkina town of Banfora. Town councils have to assume responsibilities because the law says the government has transferred powers to them.

Public services are also there to serve the public. Businesspeople, artisans, farmers and stockbreeders no longer pay taxes to the government but to town or regional authorities and the latter have to provide services in exchange. If I, as a mayor, decide to build a park and the population don’t like it and prefer to have a school, then I’ve failed.

A government decides to decentralise so people are closer to decision-makers. So we must implement the policy as both the government and the people want.

So the last word goes to the local partners? Of course. No solid and sustainable development is possible without involvement of local people and politicians, civil society, youth organisations, women, tribal chiefs, religious leaders and businesspeople. ●





«We have to make people aware, talk to them and tell them, for example, about customs, police and other checks.»

*Célestin Koussoubé,
Mayor of Bobo Dioulasso (Burkina Faso)*

Why are you at this cross-border workshop?

Because we're part of the SKBo area and affected by cross-border relations. Bobo is the biggest of the three cities and a busy crossroads.

Can this area really be called a "border country"?

Yes, for social, cultural and historic reasons. The inhabitants are mostly Senufo people, who have family and trade ties. They don't see a geopolitical border because they have relatives on the other side. They're Burkinabe and farm in Mali and Côte d'Ivoire. What they produce is also complementary and it's up to local and central governments to make use of all this potential.

How can Bobo contribute to cross-border development?

The city's especially involved because it's a crossroads. It can help by providing more infrastructure for the area's economic and cultural development. Bobo has major facilities, such as its fruit-handling depot that can be used by the region. It's also a marketplace for meat and cattle because, along with Sikasso, it's on the route traded animals take on their way to Togo, Ghana, Mali and Côte d'Ivoire. Bobo also has a slaughterhouse that could handle quality regional exports.

How can the needs be met of local people (farmers, traders, herders and fishermen) who take little part in this kind of meeting?

ECOLOG surveys done in 2000, involving civil society and various development

actors, (haulage firms and sellers of fruit, meat, tourism and culture) looked at the economic and socio-cultural management of the area.

So we plan to set up, with government and World Bank help, facilities such as an expanded fruit depot that can handle and sort 35,000 tonnes of fruit and vegetables a year. An international road freight terminal is being built for truckers from Sikasso as they pass through Bobo on their way to Ghana or Togo, especially as the roads have been congested since the Ivorian crisis began. It's very important to tell those working and living in the border area about the facilities available and about customs, police and other formalities. ●

Interview of Seydou Tembely, Deputy Prefect of Kadiolo (Mali)

THE CASE FOR A CROSS-BORDER MICRO-FINANCE NETWORK

Lawlessness in the SKBo area is worrying. For example, businesspeople from the circle of Kadiolo (100 km from Sikasso, in the far south of Mali on the border with Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina) risk being robbed when they transport large amounts of cash for lack of a bank or other financial institution to deposit their money.

Seydou Tembely, the Kadiolo deputy prefect, told the Sikasso workshop how useful it would be to have a cross-border micro-finance network to provide savings and credit services for the Kadiolo circle and neighbouring provinces in Burkina and Côte d'Ivoire.

This would combat the robberies and could provide border inhabitants with medical care and social security. The area offers good business prospects due to its cereals, fruit and vegetables, cola nuts, avocados and cattle production and trade activities. Also Kadiolo's 18,000 strong population is increasing rapidly, also due to an influx of refugees from Côte d'Ivoire. ●

*Aguibou Diarra
National Director of Frontier Affairs
Ministry of Territorial Administration and Local
Government (Mali)*



*Dramane Diarra
Director-general of Territorial Affairs
Ministry of Territorial Administration and
Decentralisation (Burkina Faso)*

*« We must expect disappointment if funding
doesn't come through »*

*“Don't think about the border itself but about
border areas and places to make contact”*

Has the “cross-border area” idea been advanced by this meeting in Sikasso?

I'm very happy the border authorities have promised to implement it.

Have you expected such commitment from local people?

Every new idea has teething problems but the strong commitment by those involved and by the politicians is reassuring. Their consent is a first encouraging step and a sign they realise the importance of thinking in terms of a “cross-border area” and its benefits for local inhabitants.

Expectations are very high after the workshop. Can you meet them?

A new idea always includes problems and disappointments, such as when funding doesn't come through. But we trust our development partners, who have shown their commitment by attending the workshop. The UNDP offices in Ouagadougou and Bamako have already provided funding for the Cross-Border Initiatives Programme (CIP). ●

Has the “cross-border area” idea firmly taken root with this meeting?

Cross-border cooperation happens at the level of the people themselves. Apart from their links with each other, they have to think in terms of areas and places to make contact, not about the physical border itself. They have to get beyond a purely nationalistic view. One has to highlight the presence of very senior officials in charge of border affairs at the meeting who discussed with other participants for three days how to develop the SKBo area.

Local people regularly complain they're badly treated at the border. Could this poor treatment be monitored?

This would perhaps be overkill, since the problem is the bad behaviour of a few individuals. Everyone working at the border knows the laws and regulations they have to obey and these ought to be applicable so those crossing (who may not be familiar with them) aren't harassed. But there are many abuses. We in Burkina are trying to tackle the problem with awareness campaigns and meetings of border officials from Burkina and Mali that also include those in charge of technical services. ●

“CROSS-BORDER AREA”: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

Moumouni Fabre, Burkina Faso’s minister of territorial administration and decentralisation, and Gen Kafougouna Kone, Mali’s minister of territorial administration and local government, attended the entire Sikasso workshop, showing the importance of border issues to both countries and giving the ministers direct experience of the first projects arising from the Cross-Border Initiatives Programme (CIP). Their sponsorship helped to move the idea of a “cross-border area” from theory into practice and they promised to underwrite the process of building genuine local integration.

*Moumouni Fabré,
Minister of Territorial Administration
and Decentralisation
(Burkina Faso)*



*General Kafougouna Koné,
Minister of Territorial
Administration and
Local Government (Mali)*

Moumouni Fabré : “These are projects initiated by local people and partners who want solid results to improve their standard of living.”

The workshop has asked you to ensure that projects either already defined or still to be are implemented. What can we expect in practice?

Some things especially concern us, such as decentralised services of central or local government. It’s easier for us to use these to help bring the workshop’s proposals to fruition. We’ve also been asked to talk to the health and foreign ministries about the workshop’s proposals such as ambulances crossing the border.

We heard several times during the workshop that Mali is indebted to Burkina for its help since the start of the Ivorian crisis. This would be part of cross-border co-operation, wouldn’t it?

Yes, Malian lorries pass through Burkina to reach Lome, Cotonou, Nigeria and Ghana and without close cooperation between our

two countries, it would’ve been difficult. The Ivorian situation has taught us a few things. We have to strengthen ties with Mali to streamline movement of goods and people. Road improvements have begun and in Burkina we plan to work on the road from Bobo-Dioulasso to shorten the journey to Ghanaian ports. The surfaces will be reinforced to cope with the heavier traffic. We will also reduce travel obstacles so the business sector can operate more efficiently.

Donor agencies have got us used to seeing jeeps arrive in villages to carry out projects dreamt up in distant offices, but here at this workshop in Sikasso, the beneficiaries themselves were asked to suggest projects. What can we expect from this new approach?

I think it’s the best way. Funding procedures used to be slow and complicated. Projects were designed and then money for them was sought. Something due for completion in six months or a year took two years. So we’re glad donors are now asking us to suggest projects to them for speedy action. The other problem is how to get the money to start work on a project as soon as it’s ready. This is important if we’re to be credible. Local politicians are especially concerned because they have to present results if they want to be re-elected. ●

Minister Kafougouna Koné: *“The idea of a cross-border area has spread to the whole region and we have to follow it up and evaluate it”*

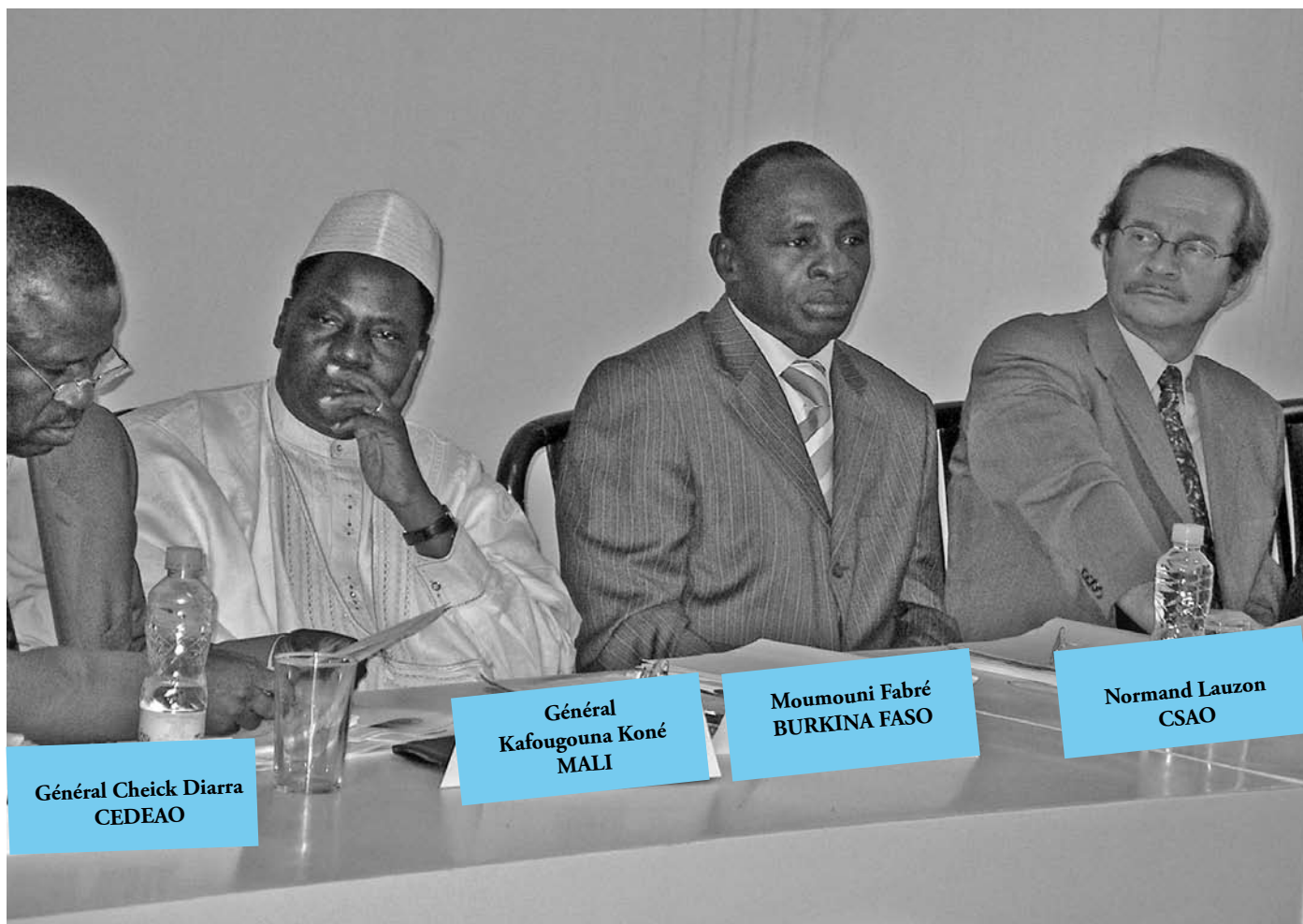
The “cross-border area” concept was born here in Mali. Do you consider the CIP a huge challenge?

This workshop follows up the idea, which first arose in Sikasso in 2002 and became part of the ECOWAS agenda in 2005. But Mali can't call the concept its own any longer as it's been adopted by the region. This workshop is launching the implementation phase through projects. We're moving from theory to practice, which is encouraging my colleagues and myself as we are responsible for regional local development.

How is Mali-Burkina cross-border cooperation going?

Our relations with Burkina Faso were excellent well before the Ivorian crisis. There are no problems and whenever any do arise, I phone my opposite number in Ouagadougou, and vice-versa. Someone asked me during the workshop why there were so few regular meetings between Malian and Burkinabe officials. I told him that because we had good relations and not much money, it was best to just focus on border problems.

The workshop approved some project proposals that especially involve institutional partners. What's your comment? The workshop included local politicians, who're key figures in a grassroots approach. If mayors of border towns want to get re-elected, they must work in this direction. I'll be making my own contribution at the necessary level. ●



The workshops in Sikasso and Ziguinchor are the fruit of a long process of feeling a way towards cross-border integration. Normand Lauzon, director of the OECD's Sahel and West Africa Club (SWAC), and Laurent Bossard, SWAC unit chief, have always strongly believed in cross-border cooperation as a way to develop the region.

Laurent Bossard recalls that "it all began with a meeting with Mali's national director of frontier affairs, Aguibou Diarra, whose job was to promote cross-border cooperation along the lines of the 'cross-border area' concept."

Meetings were then held in 2003 with a Dakar based NGO, Enda Diapol, "that also realised the importance of grassroots development for regional integration." A workshop in July that year led to "setting up a small network around border issues" – the West African Borders and Integration (WABI) network, based on a local approach.

"A key moment was when ECOWAS adopted the concept and hosted the second network workshop at its headquarters in Abuja (Nigeria). Then in January 2005, ECOWAS heads of state recognised it and approved and launched the Cross-Border Initiatives Programme (CIP), which was given legal standing." Two trial programmes were launched at workshops in Sikasso and Ziguinchor.

"The idea is to give the floor to local people – businessmen, local authorities, farmers, young people, community groups and women's movements," says Normand Lauzon.

The time is right too "The international community has been interested in a more participatory approach for the past decade," he says. "To achieve it, local problems and opportunities have to be carefully identified and local actors strongly involved. Everyone helps to move things forward, discussing and seeking solutions,



*Laurent Bossard,
Head of Unit, SWAC-OECD
Local Development and
Regional Integration Process*

whether it's the beekeeper, the doctor, the governor, or the mayor of a small town or a big one like Sikasso." Involvement of border area inhabitants is vital because "local problems can't be solved without the people they affect."

Normand Lauzon congratulates local partners. He is satisfied that local and international development partners concerns converge. "What's important is that they all give priority to action rather than talk," he says.

The presence throughout the three-day Sikasso workshop of the Malian and Burkinabe ministers of territorial administration confirmed his view, especially as the ministers were "very aware of not

just the problems but also the huge potential of border areas.

"The adopted projects involve participation and are backed by local mayors, governors and prefects who will work to build consultation and dialogue with the inhabitants, and also by the central government and regional organisations such as CILSS, WAEMU and ECOWAS," the Director adds.

“The border is kind of part of our umbilical cord”

Baldé Alvarenga Jaime,
Member of the Guinea-Bissau parliament



“Cross-border issues are a frequent concern in our region and often discussed in parliament. A country like ours can’t ignore the daily problems of moving goods and people. The border is kind of “part of our umbilical cord.” We can’t ignore it.

I was born in the village of Cambaju, about 500 metres from Senegal and I’m often asked to help solve border problems. I get invited almost every week to meetings of vigilance and peace committees.

The area has to deal with cattle-rustling and other security issues, so it’s good that well-organised groups monitoring peace and security can meet at the broader level of the Cross-Border Initiatives Programme (CIP) and thus have a chance to be more effective. It’s a big step towards a balanced situation if the monitoring and vigilance committees on both sides of the border can work together and coordinate their activity because the thieves depend on the contacts they’ve got on both sides of the border.”

Brahima Goumbo Baldé, was born in the Bafata region and live in Fadionkito, in the Kontouboelle district. He rose to be a Colonel fighting on the side of the Portuguese in the war for independence. After it was over, it then headed the youth movement of the ruling PAIGC (Partido Africano da Independência de Guiné e Cabo verde) then became political Commissar for the Kolda district. He ended as a field Commander of the people’s militias along the border between Senegal and Guinea-Bissau based in Fadionkito. Since the democratic process began in 1991, he has helped build up the PCD party as its second vice-president. He, then, returned to Fadionkitoto just run the producers’ federation.

*Interview of Brahima Goumbo Baldé,
Second Vice-président of the PCD (Guinea Bissau)*

What about the lawlessness in your region? What’s the cause of it? Does it come from cross-border issues such as the crisis in Casamance?

The law and order problems aren’t just political but more broadly due to poverty. Arbitrary behaviour and the use of force also cause frustration and unrest. Most Guinea-Bissauans think only a government job can ensure their survival. Many people tend to politicise their demands or link them to ethnicity and this has created instability over the past 30 years that holds back national development.

It’s said that all Guinea-Bissauans have had a gun in their house since the independence war and that weapons can easily be bought in the markets (loumos). Has this encouraged cross-border cattle-rustling, armed gangs and tension in the Casamance region?

Officially, you aren’t allowed to have a gun in Guinea-Bissau, but since the war, many people have armed themselves to protect their families and property. But few peasants have anything more than hunting rifles. They don’t have Kalashnikovs or other automatic weapons. Demobbed or retired soldiers are the biggest problem because many have known nothing except war and have no other way of earning a living.

Are you afraid the recent local elections will be followed by ethnic reprisals that could set off major flows of refugees trying to cross the border?

It’s hard to predict big population movements. The transition from ex-president Kumba Yala to President Nino Vieira was completed on 1 October, with the other candidate, Malam Bacai Sanha, conceding defeat. The country’s democratic process is under way. Even if there are reprisals, it’s comforting to know people don’t take notice of the border and have relatives on the Senegalese side to stay with. I think everyone’s ready now to work together to build peace and calm in the country.

*Interview of Ndèye Souané
Head of a women's organisation (GPF) in Tanaff (Senegal)*

Ndèye Souané is head of a women's organization (GPF) in the Tanaff area, less than 10kms from the border with Guinea-Bissau. My husband is from Guinea-Bissau and I lived and worked there between 1990 and 1997, between Farim and Dungal, in environmental education. Since 1997, the GPF associated with the water and forests department, deliver information about the danger of brushfires and the ban on felling large trees. They also work in implementing projects on desalinisation in border valleys and on local education with development partners (Sahel 3000 first, GTZ ProCas further).

What about the lawlessness in your region? What's the cause of it? Is the problem cross-border issues such as the crisis in Casamance?

Tanaff is a volatile area as there are lots of weapons there and it's a handy base because Guinea-Bissau is only 7-10 kms away, making it easy for armed groups to escape. If trouble breaks out there again, it'll spread to the whole region, so law and order remains a big local issue. It's linked to poverty and some troublemakers recruit young people on the Senegalese side. It also increases theft on this side of the border and is made worse by all the bureaucracy and complications at the police and customs posts on both sides.

Senegalese have to pay 500 CFA francs to cross the border at Tanaff, and at Dungal (before Farim) you have to pay both the police and then the army in both directions. It comes to 3,000 CFA francs most of the time, unless they get you for what you've bought on the other side.

Sugar, tomatoes and tea are cheaper over there but are often confiscated, which discourages people from doing business.

If trade isn't encouraged and made easier in the area, there won't be any development and without that the lawlessness will continue. People feel abandoned and very frustrated, with no local solution to their problems. Only a couple of months ago, a policeman was killed inside Senegal less than a dozen kms from the Tanaff border crossing.

It's said that all Guinea-Bissauans have had a gun in their house since the independence war and that weapons can easily be bought in the markets (loumos). Has this encouraged cross-border cattle-rustling, armed gangs and tension in the Casamance region?

Yes, they've all had guns since then and because they've lived in this situation since childhood, you could say there's a tradition of violence. When the war ended, many youngsters had to leave the army.

They kept their weapons but weren't helped to make the transition, so some became mercenaries and now live by robbery. Guns and ammunition are openly sold in all markets in the region. The farmers and stockbreeders have weapons to defend themselves against the organised gangs that operate freely and sometimes have international connections. The fighting has died down now but the gangs continue their raids. What's needed is a programme of disarmament and professional retraining. Pleas by citizens to respect rights must be met by serious official action.

Are you afraid the recent local elections will be followed by ethnic reprisals that could set off major flows of refugees trying to cross the border?

Solidarity and family ties provide alternatives to forced displacement of border inhabitants who are driven out of villages looted and burned by the gangs. The problem is that when these inhabitants arrive in other villages, they don't have any money or belongings and the hosts already have trouble feeding their own families during the dry season. Sometimes the local population swells six or sevenfold, causing serious food and health problems. Programmes to resettle people in border villages are unsatisfactory and the hosts are sometimes annoyed at not getting any compensation or help for taking them in. All this makes it easy for the gangs to recruit young people. ●

"The future of the CIP depends on us"

*Robert Sagna,
Mayor of Ziguinchor*

«Ziguinchor's a war zone, so it's an honour to host such a workshop, which also launches a trial CIP project. If we set aside the fighting that's blocked the growth of much of the region's economy and other activities, Ziguinchor is still the crossroads of Sénégalambie méridionale. The workshop is important because it launches projects that can strengthen peace. It's also reassuring that these initiatives are welcomed by the local people, because it's they who're best qualified to preserve an area whose abundance has always made it a centre of trade and other exchanges.

The importance of the resolutions passed during the workshop will be greater if they are implemented and boost the solidarity needed for our region's development. The future of the CIP depends on us.» ●

“WE WISH TO CREATE A DIALOGUE”

*Interview of Xavier Ndecki
Fisheries department in Sao Domingo (Guinea-Bissau)*

Xavier Ndecki is in charge of the national fisheries department in Sao Domingo since 2001, monitoring vessels, protecting fishing stock and the environment and issuing licences to fish in Guinean-Bissauan territorial waters. He is responsible for a large border area stretching from Eskoudiak to Sidengal.

Why are there disputes between Guinea-Bissauan and Senegalese fishermen in these waters?

You have to remember Senegalese boats have traditionally fished in Guinea-Bissauan waters and have been based in Sao Domingo for generations. The Niominka “Saloum-Saloum” communities from the islands have moved to Bissau after making their fortune from fishing over several decades.

Guinea-Bissauans are not habitual fishermen and learned from the Senegalese how to fish. So there aren’t really maritime borders and fishermen just have to observe the rules on each side.

There also aren’t many fish on the Senegalese side and the situation has been made worse by recent big Senegalese tax increases on fishing boats, driving a great number of them into Guinea-Bissauan waters. A lot of large fish are to be found in the bolongs (mangrove backwaters) but the number of foreign boats in Guinea-Bissauan waters causes annoyance.

Senegalese and Guinea-Bissauans also fish differently – the latter using bottom set gillnets and the former using larger boats and trolling nets. So the Senegalese accidentally cut many nets and they get carried across the border.

Trouble also arises because environmental rules are not observed. A World Conservation Union mangrove protection programme has helped us monitor protected areas, especially in the bolongs where the fish lay their eggs. Heavily-equipped fishermen tend to damage the environment and sell their catches in Ziguinchor, Banjul, Joal, Mbour and Dakar, far from the local economies.

How do you and your Senegalese colleagues settle these disputes?

I travel very often to Ziguinchor and Cap Skirring to meet fishermen and ensure accidentally-removed nets and hooks get returned. I also go to Eskoudiak (Guinea-Bissau) and Elikin, two ports much used by Senegalese fishermen on their way to fish markets in Lower Casamance.

I’m also in contact with the Ziguinchor regional fisheries department, the Oussouye provincial department and fishery officials in Elinkin and Cap Skirring. But such meetings aren’t regular and are only to settle disputes as they come up. We need to have discussions to draw up an action plan because the different fishing methods remain a big problem and a source of unresolved disputes.

What are the prospects for cross-border fishing cooperation?

Before we can work together to standardise regulations (which will take time and force us to negotiate with commercial interests more powerful than we are) we must help the Ziguinchor fisheries department to ensure licences are bought to fish in Guinea-Bissauan territorial waters. The high cost of Senegalese licences may encourage Senegalese fishermen to move to Guinea-Bissauan waters, though they’ll still have to pay for licences here.

We also have to think about how payment is made so as not to break the ancient chain of solidarity that links fishermen on each side of the border. An annual licence of 80,000 CFA francs is no trivial matter for small-time fishermen and by fully maintaining this fee, we risk harming small local fishing operations and boosting industrial fishing, which would damage the environment and also fishing stocks. We could reach agreement with Senegal to pay for licences in three or even six-monthly instalments. ●

*Interview de Sa Majesté le roi d’Oussouye
(Ziguinchor- Sénégal)*

As a Diola tribal chief, you often have to go to the Guinea-Bissau border to talk with your counterparts on the other side. Is it safe for you to move around there in view of the unrest in Lower Casamance?

Whenever there’s a Diola tribal ceremony on either side of the border or a decision to be made involving the people on one side or the other, all the chiefs have to meet beforehand. But security problems mean I can’t travel along the sacred road that links Oussouye to Eskoudiak and Kerouay, in Guinea-Bissau.

Last year the AJA EDO group, which works on border issues, asked the army to ensure the road between Santhiaba Manjaque and Erouek was safe. The once much-used road had been mined. The mines have now been removed but recent military operations in the area have not yet made southwestern Lower Casamance safe again. ●

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